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SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER DISCUSSES GALAPAGOS  
WITH PRESIDENT GUTIERREZ

¶1. Summary: At dinner on August 5, former President Jimmy Carter discussed with President Lucio Gutierrez the importance of protection of the Galapagos Islands. Gutierrez also expressed concern for the issue. Carter suggested that the Carter Center may host a conference on the protection of the Galapagos, and Gutierrez promised to send a high-level delegation to such a conference ready to discuss in detail the options. End Summary.

¶2. At the end of his family vacation in the Galapagos, Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter accepted the invitation of President Gutierrez to meet for dinner. Ambassador also attended, as did a variety of GOE officials and Gutierrez friends and family. Ambassador had briefed Carter before the dinner on U.S. priorities and efforts in the Galapagos issue. He said his visit to the islands had worried him. Uncontrolled population growth and questions about the implementation of fishing regulations, together with complaints about park management and cuts in the budget of the national park operations raised doubts whether this important ecological resource was being adequately protected.

¶3. Gutierrez admitted that he also was worried. The GOE was taking action, though. A ban on shark fin exports would soon be in place and would help defend marine resources near the islands. The GOE would like to retrain fishermen in the Galapagos and help them find other kinds of work, but funds were scarce.

¶4. Carter noted that the Galapagos, of course belonged to Ecuador. Still, we wanted to help. He expressed concern that, despite the best of intentions on the part of the GOE, this incredible ecosystem could disappear in five years. He suggested that maybe the Carter Center could host a conference to discuss the alternatives and how to implement programs that would guarantee the future of the Galapagos. If the Center did sponsor such a conference, would the GOE participate? he asked. Gutierrez promised that the GOE would participate in force. He would send the Minister of Environment, and high-level officials from the Ministry of Tourism. He was certain that representatives of the fishing industry would also want to be concluded.

¶5. Comment: Jimmy Carter's concern for the protection of the Galapagos clearly had an impact on Gutierrez' thinking. We believe such a conference on Galapagos would be particularly timely now, given the pressure on the islands.

KENNEY